

Case Number:	CM15-0178155		
Date Assigned:	09/18/2015	Date of Injury:	06/11/2002
Decision Date:	10/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/03/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/10/2015

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The expert reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The injured worker is a 61 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on June 11, 2002. Medical records indicate that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for cervical spondylosis without myelopathy, cervical degenerative disc disease and cervicalgia. The injured worker was noted to be permanent and stationary and was not working. Current documentation dated August 26, 2015 notes that the injured worker reported chronic neck pain. Examination of the cervical spine revealed tenderness in the right mid to lower paracervical areas. Range of motion was restricted and painful. Deep tendon reflexes and strength were intact in the upper extremities. Treatment and evaluation to date has included medications, MRI of the cervical spine (5-1-2015), cervical facet block (8-6-2015), radiofrequency ablation and a transcutaneous electrical nerve (TENS) unit. The injured worker was noted to use the TENS unit on a regular basis. The injured worker noted a 30-40% decreased in pain with the use of the TENS unit. A current medication list was not found in the medical records. The treating physician's request for authorization dated August 27, 2015 included a request for a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit purchase. The Utilization Review documentation dated September 3, 2015 modified the request to a two lead generic transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit purchase (original request was a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit purchase).

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

TENS unit purchase: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation states: TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation). Not recommended as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered as a noninvasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration, for the conditions described below. While TENS may reflect the long-standing accepted standard of care within many medical communities, the results of studies are inconclusive; the published trials do not provide information on the stimulation parameters, which are most likely to provide optimum pain relief, nor do they answer questions about long-term effectiveness.(Carroll-Cochrane, 2001) Several published evidence-based assessments of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) have found that evidence is lacking concerning effectiveness. One problem with current studies is that many only evaluated single-dose treatment, which may not reflect the use of this modality in a clinical setting. Other problems include statistical methodology, small sample size, influence of placebo effect, and difficulty comparing the different outcomes that were measured. This treatment option is recommended as an adjunct to a program of evidence based functional restoration. However, it is recommended for a one-month trial to document subjective and objective gains from the treatment. There is no provided documentation of a one-month trial period with objective measurements of improvement in pain and function just that pain was reduced 30-40%. Therefore, criteria have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.